

INSPECTION CONNECTION

Sensory Evaluation for the Industry

On November 3-4, 2004, the USDC Seafood Inspection Program, participated with the California Sea Grant, the National Fisheries Institute, and the Food and Drug Administration, in offering two sensory evaluation workshops for the U.S. seafood importers, processors, overseas exporters and third-party seafood inspectors. The workshops were held at the USDC Western Inspection Office in Bell, California. Leonard Shanks along with Carmel Williams led group discussions on evaluating seafood quality. The course focused on how to assess the quality of tuna, mahi, and shrimp.

The importance of sound sensory evaluation of seafood products has been increasingly recognized within the industry. These workshops assist quality analysts in developing skills to properly assess quality in seafood products and train students to become better at sensory testing through both hands-on experience and science-based instruction. Additionally, this type of organoleptic training - sight, smell, taste, and touch - can also be used to assess decomposition of product.

In the first workshop students were given examples of fresh-frozen tuna and mahi steaks. Most of the samples provided were treated with carbon monoxide in which students had to determine whether the smell was indicative of decomposition or improper smoke filtering. The second workshop focused on evaluating the quality of three species of shrimp - black tiger shrimp, Mexican brown shrimp and Mexican white shrimp.



Len Shanks and Pam Tom

Photo credit: Christina Johnson, CA Sea Grant



USDC Inspector - Carmel Williams

“Personally, I feel this is the best course for the money,” says Len Shanks. “The level of expertise is outstanding. For example, Jim Barnett from FDA, Pam Tom from UC Davis, and the entire group of trainers, there’s no better sensory training available.”

The next course will be held in Gloucester, MA, March 16-17, 2005. For information and registration contact Mike Diliberti at (978) 281-9123. Space is limited.

In addition to this workshop, the USDC National Sensory Section has held several workshops. In October 2004, a custom tuna course was presented in Ecuador to twenty Star-Kist quality assurance personnel. Terri Reilly (former Chief of National Sensory Section) was the facilitator, Jim Barnett (FDA), Carmel Williams (USDC-Bell), and Carlos Zayas (USDC-St Petersburg) comprised the sensory analyst team. Steve Barusso (USDC-Gloucester) was the sample coordinator.

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In February 2005, an international sensory workshop was held in Seattle, WA. Eighteen participants from Canada, Mexico, South Africa, and Thailand, as well as FDA and USDC personnel attended this multiple species course. Michael DiLiberti (USDC-Gloucester), Michael Knipe (SABS- South Africa), and Carmel Williams comprised the sensory analyst team. Carol Kelly (USDC- National Sensory Section Chief) was the facilitator and Steve Barusso and Brian Vaubel (USDC-Seattle) were sample coordinators.

March 2005, DSCP auditors (military purchasing food team) attended a sensory class in Gloucester, MA, where multiple species were covered. Michael DiLiberti, Len Shanks (USDC-Bell), and Carmel Williams served as the sensory analyst team and Carol Kelly was the facilitator.

USDC International Services

by Karla Ruzicka

In recent years, USDC has seen significant growth and increased interest in its verification services for international seafood facilities. Under this program, processing and manufacturing facilities are audited by USDC inspection staff to determine compliance with U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations including Part 110 Good Manufacturing Practices and Part 123 the Seafood HACCP Regulation. In addition, audits often incorporate buyers specifications for U.S. seafood importing companies.

USDC's international clients include seafood producers/factory trawlers, shore-based primary processing and value-added manufacturing facilities. Depending on the needs of the firm and/or the buyer, USDC may perform verifications at the frequency requested by the buyer of the products.

The USDC publishes in hard copy an Approved International Facilities list. This list, also updated online on a monthly basis, provides buyers and sellers with information on the capability of international seafood producers to meet U.S. regulatory requirements and their specific quality specifications.

An international seafood company under this Program will be audited four times yearly, combining desk/records audits with on-site verification of facility controls. USDC will verify that international producers or processors of seafood products meet the regulatory and buyer's quality requirements.

Inclusion on this list is contingent upon a firm's continued ability to meet U.S. regulatory requirements as verified by USDC Systems Audits. Seafood products produced by these facilities are not USDC inspected, graded or certified in the foreign country. However, products may be USDC Lot Inspected when they arrive in the U.S. or its territories.

By meeting USDC's Verification Audit requirements, international suppliers can demonstrate that they comply with FDA regulations and are capable of satisfying additional buyer specifications allowing companies to compete in new U.S. markets. Third party supplier audits may also be performed for U.S. buyers.

To learn more about meeting USDC's requirements for Approved International Facilities, contact either Steve Wilson at Steven.Wilson@noaa.gov or Ken Aadsen at Kenneth.Aadsen@noaa.gov. Or, they may be contacted by phone at our Headquarters office at (301) 713-2355.

QUESTION CORNER

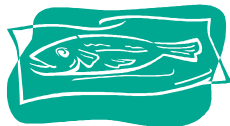
Q: Can I pay my Inspection Services bill online?

A: Yes. As of December 2004, online payment was made available through Pay.gov.



TRAWLING THE NET

Need consumer information on seafood quality? Visit:
seafood.ucdavis.edu/consumer/quality.htm



Customer Service

by Monty Berg

The USDC Customer Service Group is continuing its efforts to respond to inquiries from buyers regarding inspected products and the scheduling of the inspections to meet those needs. The largest and most rapidly increasing sector for USDC inspected products remains the retail industry.

There will be a meeting with buyers from Wal-Mart, USDC Inspection personnel, and any interested suppliers during the International Boston Seafood Show on March 13th at 11:00 a.m., in room 205A. The purpose of this meeting will be to address any concerns suppliers may have regarding the availability and scheduling of USDC inspections in order to meet the Wal-Mart purchase specifications for seafood products. USDC representatives from headquarters and the three regions will be in attendance to ensure that no question goes unanswered.

We have also been holding meetings with product specific sectors of the industry in our drive to encourage the use of the U.S. Grade A on domestically produced products. Use of the U.S. Grade A mark offers the industry the marketing advantage to promote the quality and wholesomeness of domestic product.

Good service to the industry, the buyers and to the public are our first priority. I encourage you to call me with any questions at (727) 570-5744.

CALENDAR

HACCP Workshops for Industry

The Industry HACCP course is an intense three-day course that covers all aspects of the HACCP concept as it relates to seafood harvesting, processing, transporting, distributing and retailing.

March

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| 15-17 | Boston, MA (Spanish-w/the Boston Seafood Show) |
| 22-24 | Seattle, WA |
| 29-31 | Gloucester, MA |

April

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| 19-21 | Miami, FL (Spanish) |
| 26-28 | Twin Falls, ID |

May

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| TBA | Wilmington, NC |
| 3-5 | Miami, FL |
| 24-26 | San Francisco, CA |

June

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| 7-9 | Gloucester, MA |
| 21-23 | Brownsville, TX (Spanish) |
| 28-30 | Long Beach, CA |

2005 Trade Shows

Look for the USDC Seafood Inspection booth at the following show(s):

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| Marine Hotel Assn. Show
Hollywood, FL
April 10-12 | Louisiana Foodservice Expo
New Orleans, LA
August 6-8 |
| European Seafood Expo
Brussels
April 26-28 | West Coast Seafood Show
Los Angeles, CA
October 9-11 |
| China Seafood Expo
Shanghai, China
June 28-30 | |
| American School Foodservice Assn.
Baltimore, MD
July 17-20 | |



Copies of this newsletter can be obtained at seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov or you can be added to the mailing list by sending your name, company, and address to the following: Documentation Approval and Supply Services Section, USDC/NOAA, 3207 Frederic Street, Suite B, P.O. Drawer 1207, Pascagoula, MS 39568-1207.

U.S. Department of Commerce
NOAA Fisheries
Seafood Inspection Program